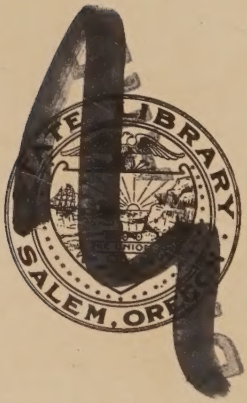
OUT OF THE NIGHT

FREDERICK·ORIN·BARTLETT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BY

FREDERICK ORIN BARTLETT

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To

JANE'S MOTHER

IN WHOSE LIKENESS JANE WAS

Preface

THIS little book was written and privately printed after the death of my elder daughter, Jane. It was intended only for those who knew or knew of her. It is with some hesitancy, then, that I permit it to go before the general public. And yet this public — what is it but a larger circle of a larger family? We are living common lives, gropingly, in a common world; running with slight variations the same gamut of emotions and facing the same mysterious problems. The most deeply personal of our griefs are at the same time the most grimly impersonal because the most universal. Whether we would

or not we are forever sharing these common experiences with the world, particularly those involved in separation through death. To a man and woman we must, sooner or later, face the stern alternative of going away ourselves or of helplessly watching those we love go from us. Unless we believe our lives to be no more intelligent than the lives of beasts of the field, we must each of us formulate some theory that in this crisis will give us at least a hope to which we may cling.

Through Jane I became as convinced of a life to come as I am of a life here. That fact is important only to myself. But I found that the argument forced upon me by my acute need was, in some measure, satisfying

the needs of a great many others. I feel, then, that if I can reach even further and, indirectly, make Jane's brief but beautiful girlhood of still wider service, I shall have helped her a little to fulfill the useful life for which I believe she was destined had she lived to full womanhood.

F. O. B.

Out of the Night

I

WE went bass-fishing last summer — Jane and I.

She was nine. Her somewhat serious, thoughtful face had become well rounded by simple country living and her cheeks tanned and tinted by the mountain air; her big, clear blue eyes — the whites made a deeper white by the shade of blue in them — were marked by full dark brows, exquisitely curved; her forehead — unscarred by any troubled thought — expressed serenity; her child's nose was not yet fully formed, nor her mouth, but somehow they were dis-

tinctly Jane's nose and mouth; her brown hair was heavy, very heavy, and none too orderly, for she was just learning to care for it herself and her fingers were not very nimble; her figure was gently perfect — beautiful as only youth can be beautiful. Her clothes were nondescript, for she liked to romp, free limbed, with her brothers, disregarding her appearance.

I asked her if she wished to come with me and she answered,

"Yes, Daddy."

But I was not quite sure, for I thought she might be only trying to please me. She liked to please me. We were good comrades. So, too, was she a good comrade with her brothers — and with every one for that matter. However, because I de-

sired her companionship I did not question her further.

We went to the garden for bait and then down the hill to the boat-house — she keeping close to my side. She always kept close to my side, taking my arm in an old-fashioned way. She was like one of Louisa Alcott's girls. I often called her "Old Faithful."

We opened the boat-house, collected our poles and the oars and the anchor, and carried them to the row-boat on the shore where with the other children we spent so much summer time. I helped Jane to her seat in the stern — a timid little body ordinarily, but confident now because I was with her. She always brought home to me the wonder and glory and responsibil-

ity of my relationship to her, the majesty of that common everyday title of father, which even kings do not know except as they have children.

I shoved the boat over the yellow sand and out into the gray-blue inland water. Opposite our starting-point and less than a mile away stood a ridge, tree-clad halfway up, but from there plotted out in square fields. Above this there was a vast arc of sky. To the left the rocky shore, bordered with pines, ran some three or four miles north by west, toward the White Mountains. We had not gone a hundred yards before we saw Washington. This was fifty miles away, but from those heavy slopes ran lesser hills, line upon line of them, reaching to the head of the lake. To the north

the sky was overcast, but above, it was clear. Showers whipped by a high wind were evidently roaming about, but we did not care. We were going toward the foot of the lake and were tempered to all sorts of weather.

I faced Jane as I rowed. Often she looked at me and smiled. She smiled easily, and I made up fool things — nonsense and doggerel — to amuse her. Now and then she would expostulate.

"Daddy!"

But I knew she was pleased, and so was glad to play the clown.

The blue sky was overhead — such a lot of blue sky. But the nearer to the middle of the lake we came, the clearer we could see to the north the slate-

gray showers drenching the distant heights.

"Do you think we'll get wet, Daddy?" she asked.

"I don't know," I answered. "But we must catch a fish for Ann."

Ann was her sister — four years old. That was a stock line of mine. As it happened, we nearly always did catch a fish for Ann, no matter how poor our luck might be otherwise.

We rowed slowly to the small island which was our goal, anchored some forty feet off the eastern point, and prepared our lines. Jane baited her own hook. She did it clumsily, but I did not offer to help, for I wished her to learn to do things for herself. We cast our lines into the dark water

and waited. A deep, contented peace settled upon me.

I feel it yet when I go back to that time. The world had long been vexed and still was. Beyond this charmed corner there was chaos. Here, however, it was as though there had never been war nor rumors of war. It was impossible to associate the hectic acts of men with this triumphant arc of steady blue overhead, so unchanging. And the hills — the everlasting hills — were so fixed, so stable. And Life as expressed by this young girl was so fixed, so stable, so eternal! It was impossible to think anything else. There was a touch of awe in the atmosphere. We watched, from time to time, the turbulent elements to the north, and without fear marveled at

their might and their beauty. We were not afraid of anything at that time — Jane and I. We were together — I as much under the protection of her budding youth as she under my greater strength and experience. We were at peace. I do not suppose that on earth I could more completely fill my soul with living peace. And God — in a very broad sense. Jane was of me and I of her and we were both one with Eternity.

Not that we spoke of those things — or even thought very much about them. Our chatter was matter-of-fact enough. From all directions, too, the matter-of-fact world pressed in upon us; voices from a near-by grove; the laughter of children playing in the water to the left; the mill bell in

the village below the dam; the darting of birds here and there; smoke from chimneys; ripple of water against the boat; a gust of wind that blew her hair. But these common details made our silent mood the more impressive.

We had no luck with our fishing. We caught, as I remember, our one bass for Ann, and then a stronger wind, with mist in it, and a nearing of the black clouds decided me to up anchor and return. I hauled the wet rope into the boat hand over hand, reeled in the lines, and adjusted my oars in the oar locks. Then swiftly the storm swept down upon us. The slightest trace of fear disturbed me. A heavier sense of responsibility settled upon me. But Jane, startled a bit

at first, sat tight in her seat. She was confident.

The wind stiffened and the waves broke sharply against our bow as I turned and pulled straight into the storm — the only way home. I did not feel there was any immediate danger, but of course in such a situation trouble is always possible. Soon I was pulling with all my strength and making scant headway. This was a real storm, though in miniature. I stiffened to the task, calling upon my reserve strength — glad that I had reserve strength. Inch by inch I progressed, but water was now coming over the sides. I was anxious to keep on, for I knew her mother would worry, but I soon realized I was taking too big a chance with Jane.

Over her shoulder I saw a sandy stretch on the shore, turned the boat, and pulled with the wind. We shot into shallow water. The boat rocked and Jane clutched the sides. I jumped out and dragged the craft safe in. Then I lifted Jane in my arms—she felt gloriously heavy and substantial—and carried her through the driving rain to the shore. Hand in hand we ran for the shelter of a cottage piazza. She was wet to the skin, but happily excited over the adventure of it—youth victorious.

A little later we rowed home over a calm lake. The sky was blue again. The sun was warm. We went up the hill to the house, tingling and content, carrying our fish for Ann.

II

WE went to a Fair — Jane and I and mother and Brooks and Kent and Ann and Henrietta, who so loved to see Jane dressed in her finest. Amid much excitement we prepared our lunch and bundled into our heavy things and piled into the car. Jane wore her brown coat and the black velvet tam-o'-shanter that never would stay put. It drooped back from her forehead, or it bobbed first over one ear and then the other. She did not care.

It was a fine clear morning in the early fall, and we were driving over country roads — through stretches of woods, up hills, along the shores of lakes and past deserted farms. In

back with the other children Jane was keenly anticipatory. Fakirs and Merry-Go-Rounds and Lord knows what all were ahead. I drove for an hour and a half, hearing those clear voices behind me. Finally we climbed a last long hill, and at the summit saw spread out before us a panorama of loveliness — a serried horizon of distant mountains with the lesser hills in the foreground. And an illimitable expanse of frosty blue sky. Going halfway down the decline we found ourselves on the outskirts of this tiny New England village. We drew up beside the road, looking down on the holiday crowd and the tops of the tents.

This Fair is unique. Because it is so small, it is called the World's Fair,

and after the English custom is held in the middle of the street. It is attended by farmer folk for miles around, with the usual summer visitor happily absent. We remained so late in the season that we classed ourselves as natives.

We went first into the exhibition hall, no larger than a shed, and viewed the giant pumpkins, the late strawberries, the big potatoes, the pick of the apples, and a few samples of needle-work. But we were all filled with the zest and excitement that comes from the enjoyment of little things in the country. Coming out, we paused a moment at the three or four crates of turkeys and geese, with a couple of white rabbits thrown in for good measure, which comprised

the poultry exhibit. We took a snapshot of the plump birds and the children. We have hundreds of pictures of the children and their activities — a complete pictorial history of their lives. I have before me now one of the snapshots taken of Jane on that pleasant fall outing. It shows her standing back to the camera, her tam-o'-shanter off — lost, likely enough, for she was always losing her things — her hair blowing in the breeze, her left arm slightly raised as in apprehension she watches her younger brother astride a wooden horse on the Merry-Go-Round. How proud she was of her two brothers, and what respect she had for their hardier natures! It made it easy for them to tease her.

We all mixed with the crowd and watched the funny men selling "hot dogs"; stopped before the side shows promising such strange content; stopped before an eager little man selling fountain pens; stopped before some marvelous wrestlers waiting to meet all comers; stopped to watch the young farmer boys, dressed in their best, throw baseballs at the stuffed nine-pins; stopped before a lean, tall man in a sombrero, who had a crate of noisy rattlesnakes to advertise the oil he was selling. We watched him because he was so intense. When he spoke, the cords in his neck stood out. He grew as impassioned over the value of his lotion as a revival preacher.

So we went on along the winding

village street — the purple hills always in the background and the clean mountain air sweeping across — until we came to the church, where, in the road below, young oxen were straining at heavy loads for prizes. Here we stopped, rounded up the whole family, and worked our way back to the car for lunch. We opened the big Japanese basket with its interesting layers, and there was as much excitement as though we did not know what was in it, when as a matter of fact we had all watched mother as she packed it. We had good appetites and enjoyed every mouthful — Jane particularly. She was fond of good things, eating heartily and wholesomely, laughing as she ate. That was true of the others, but it is she I remember

in more distinct detail now. She was so satisfactorily substantial — like a growing tree. This was not all she was, but, perhaps because of the surroundings of this and past summers, I associate her with the sweet and simple things of nature.

But the great hour was still to come — the hour, as it happens, which belongs to Jane and me alone. There was to be, it seems, a dance that afternoon in the town hall. Jane and I had joked about the time when she should be old enough to attend such affairs with her Daddy. She liked to dance, and in the big room of our summer home we had been practicing steps to the music of a phonograph. As we lunched — it happened we were parked before the door of the hall —

we watched the floor being made ready.

"You and I will have to try a step," I said to Jane. "Shall we, old lady?"

She was delighted. She was so easy, in all things, to please. Here was a real dance. It was her *début* as a young woman.

The hall was crowded when the fiddles and the piano and the bass drum and cymbals began their rhythmic noise, but we pushed our way in. It was a curious gathering of hardy folk in sweaters and flannel shirts, coming and going fresh from the crisp air of the village street. It was a primitive crowd, rather, but filled with good-humor. Jane's young face was distinctive here. I saw many glance at us and smile pleasantly. I slipped

my arm around her supple waist, grasped her warm hand, and in we mixed. She took herself very seriously. This was an important moment, for she was dancing with Daddy, and feeling, I suppose, quite grown up. She must watch her step. She must not disgrace me by tripping. She must prove herself worthy of this honor. I knew how she felt, and it made me proud until my face glowed. I looked ahead as we spun round and round the crowded hall—looked ahead five years, ten years, seeing her grow more and more beautiful, more and more a daughter, more and more my daughter. I was selfish, for it was just she and I in my thoughts. I was to keep young for her. She was to help me keep young.

The music stopped. With the others we applauded loudly for more. The piano began to thump and we were off — I having much to do to prevent the little figure from being bumped. Now and then, as we came full into some clumsy couple — or perhaps we ourselves were clumsy — she glanced up from the floor and smiled. I have those clumsy folk to thank for that.

Again the music stopped, and as I led Jane toward the door I saw more men and women — those seated around the edge of the hall — look at us in kindly fashion. We hurried to see mother, and to brag a little to the other children who had been left outside and had perforce to be content with peeking in at the windows. We

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seemed to be delighted with our selfishness, and when the music started again returned proudly to join the grown-ups — Jane and I.

III

JANE had learned to dance the Scottish hornpipe. She had learned. She had few natural aptitudes, and acquired most of her little accomplishments by hard work. Though her figure was so perfect, she was inclined, for some reason or other, to be clumsy. Her sense of rhythm was undeveloped — like her ear for music. Struggle as she might, she could not carry a tune, though she loved to sing. How human this awkwardness made her! I recall it even more vividly than her graces.

She had been to dancing school under Miss Monro — a young woman whose eyes and smile were in themselves a dance. By strict and serious attention to her instructress, Jane had

mastered the steps of the Scottish hornpipe until she could go through them creditably. I was proud of her effort because she had overcome so much. Often, in the summer, I sat at the piano and played the tune while she did her dance for me.

She never refused. Modest she was almost to the point of shyness, but she fought back her own feelings and did her best. Always she did her best. I see her earnest girl face so clearly — pleased because she was pleasing, but worried a bit, too, in fear lest she forget. Old Faithful! The long, wide room of our summer home, where we expressed to its fullest our family life — where we lived and frolicked in almost complete seclusion from the rest of the world

—opened upon a beautiful picture from every one of its many windows; in front upon a wide sweep of field leading down to the lake and across to a wooded ridge against the sky; in back upon clean pine trees crowding close; on one side upon a bed of tall purple larkspur where the humming-birds played even while we sat at our meals; at the other end through two narrow windows, either side of the stone fireplace, upon the woodbine which made a network of green shot through, on fair days, with sunshine. A rather ancient concert grand piano was against the wall on the front side, but it made hardly an impression on the big room. It was in the wide space in front of this that Jane danced —doing the very best she knew how.

IV

JANE and I went to the village together. It was the day late in October that we were to have started home — a drive of one hundred and eighty miles. But when we rose it was raining, so we decided to wait over until the morrow. About the middle of the forenoon, however, it cleared, and I took the car to do some errands. Jane came along. She was always ready to come along with me. It was cold, and I saw that her hands were bare. She had lost her mittens, as usual. So we went into a village store and I bought her new ones — gloves of brown woolen. We tried on many until we found just what we wished — gloves that were warm and soft

and long like gauntlets. They went up well over her wrists, and she liked them. I thought and felt what a pleasure it is to buy for those we love; to be able to furnish them with protection and comfort.

But I had added to her young life one more responsibility, because I tried to make her understand that she must not lose these new gloves. For days she watched them in a sort of fear.

V

WE were back in town. The ride home on a crisp day with the sun beaming warm from an azure sky — thank God for all the sky in her life — had been a dream picture. We had driven over frozen roads with the icy puddles making a crunching sound as we rolled through them. The trees bordering our way were scarlet and gold and brown and brilliant yellows. For the first twenty miles we kept catching glimpses of Washington, covered with virgin snow down to where the scarlet trees stopped it gorgeously. At the first the mountain had a purple hue, but as the sun rose higher this vanished, and the summit stood forth white and noble like some vast monument to purity.

We were thrilled and buoyant and happy — all of us. Bundled in warm wraps until we could hardly move, the cold stung our cheeks crimson, but could not reach our bodies. Jane wore her brown woolen gloves and a brown cloth tam — another purchase I made for her one day when we were alone.

We were back in town and settled to our winter work. Jane never looked in better health or appeared to be happier. Every morning she came into my study with her long shoes still unbuttoned, and threw her arms around my neck as I sat at work.

She was going to school, and it was her task to prepare the lunch box for herself and her two brothers. She never could satisfy them because

they always wanted more than Mary, the ever-thoughtful cook — backed by the parents — considered good for them.

She always returned at half-past one, and we at lunch used to watch for her out the window.

VI

IT was pretty to see Jane and her Grandfather. A very deep and beautiful friendship had developed between them. She appealed to him because she was so gentle and thoughtful and so old-fashioned in her ways. He appealed to her because he was so big and kind and devoted. Night after night he used to sit on the edge of her bed before she went to sleep and tell her stories of his youth, and sing to her the songs of his youth — "Old Grimes" and "The Cork Leg" and "Noah's Ark." Jane joined in the choruses with her brave monotone. And laughed in whole-souled appreciation of his efforts and asked a thousand questions. She was easy to please

because she was so genuinely interested, and so unaffectedly threw herself into the mood of the moment. She was rarely self-conscious, and then only because of a pretty modesty.

She went about a good deal with her Grandfather — in town to lunch, to the square for a cone, and every other Sunday to Uncle Charles's for dinner. He was very proud of her, and had a right to be. She, in her turn, was delighted with him. This Sunday trip, however, involved her in something of a mental conflict. She wished to go with "Gramp," and always had a good time, but, too, she liked to dine with the rest of her family. Yet she did not wish to hurt in any way her Grandfather's feelings. So there was always a moment or

two of indecision, though in the end she placed her hand in his and went. He was over six feet tall and she did not reach his waist, but I doubt if ever in his Beau Brummel days he gave his hat a more rakish tilt, or swung his cane more gallantly, or challenged the world more bravely than he did when with her.

Whenever she was ill he was with her constantly, night and day, snatching sleep as he could. A summons from Jane brought him from his bed at whatever hour. She liked to place her little hand within his big hand and hold on.

VII

JANE stood beside me just before bedtime as I sat at the piano — her hair in two long pigtails and drawn back firmly from her white forehead. We were trying to sing, though neither of us could sing at all. However, that made no difference as long as the song was in our hearts. We started with "The Camptown Races" and came in strong on the refrain of "Doo Da! Doo Da!" And we were pretty good on the last line "Oh, I'll bet my money on the bob-tailed mare, if somebody 'll bet on the gray."

We wobbled when we came to "Oh, Melinda Brown," but we did better on the simpler nursery rhymes which followed, like "Georgie Porg-

ie" and "Old King Cole"—picked up a bit when we came to "Pop Goes the Weasel" and finished strong with

"I *had a little nut tree,*
Nothing would it bear
But a silver nut meg
And a golden pear.
The King of Spain's daughter
Came to visit me,
And all for the sake of my little
nut tree."

Jane was shy of her voice, realizing that it would not do her bidding. But she sang inside.

VIII

ON the last day of November I was to take the car to Braintree and put it up for the winter. I asked Jane to come along with me after school. She was glad to do so. I bundled her up warm, for it was a bitter gray day following a rain, and the car was open. After she was seated, I took the yellow blanket and wound it all about her, well up over her chest — more than usually anxious, it seems to me, lest she catch cold. She laughed at my solicitude. Then we began a fool game. As we approached the end of a street where a turn was necessary, I pretended I did not see any turn and must go straight on over the house-tops.

"Do you think I can make it?" I asked anxiously.

"Daddy, you know you're going to find a turn."

"I can't see any, but here's one thing I *do* know" (that was a line in a funny record we were always quoting), "we must get to Braintree even if we go over the house-tops."

I drove straight ahead, she getting more and more excited, for with all her imagination she was literal-minded, and then — sure enough — we found the turn. I pretended to be much relieved.

"Well, we escaped that difficulty, Janey."

We came to the open Charles River.

"Think we can get over that?"

Her face grew serious.

"The road turns, and you know it," she insisted.

"Why, so it does!" I exclaimed, as we swung sharply. "Gee, that was a narrow escape. Suppose it *had n't* turned!"

We went on through the Fenway and through Mattapan — a familiar road, for it was this way we journeyed to so many good times at Gramma's in Scituate — and off Brook Road turned sharp to the right. Here I pretended to be lost, and, before I knew it, really had wandered to a strange road. We continued for a couple of miles, and then I voiced my fears.

"We 're lost, old lady, hopelessly lost. What are we going to do now?"

"Ask some one."

"That 's a good suggestion. But we must be sure to ask just the right person. I 'll leave that to you."

As we moved along slowly, she watched eagerly each passer-by until she saw a man in whom she had confidence. She bade me ask him and I drew up to the curb.

"Follow the car tracks," he said, "and soon you 'll come to a pretty little cement fountain where four roads meet. Take the left-hand road."

We thanked him and I caught up that line.

"A pretty little cement fountain where four roads meet."

After the fashion of "You shan't have any of my nice, big, yellow peanuts," I fooled with this catch phrase.

"We must n't miss that pretty little

cement fountain where four roads meet or we may never in our lives see that pretty little cement fountain where four roads meet, and so we might wander forever hunting for that pretty little cement fountain where four roads meet."

Well, it made her laugh, and say "Daddy" again. And finally we did find the pretty little cement fountain where the four roads meet, and it set us right.

We left the machine at the garage, and on foot made our way to the station. Here I bought her a copy of "Life," and pulled from my coat a bag of chocolate peppermints I had found in one of the side pockets of the car. On the ride home she munched her candy and read "Life."

I pretended to look at a paper, but I spent most of my time watching her chuckle over the jokes.

The last ride we took together — Jane and I.

IX

JANE, for a week, was not ill enough to cause alarm. Even when finally we did tuck her into her mother's bed, we were not greatly worried. But less than three weeks later, she was gone.

X

THE fact that overwhelmed me first was the brutality of it — the sheer, merciless, incomprehensible brutality of the power which had struck down at such a time this beautiful girl child. I was appalled at the injustice of it. I felt the need of retaliation — of something I could throw my body against. There was nothing. Something had stolen out of the dark, struck, and vanished again into the dark. The cowardly beast! And she was such a good girl.

Then — the finality of it. I had clung to hope in the face of all the evidence before my eyes. . . . That was inevitable. It was impossible to imagine Jane dead until she was dead. My

mind could not absorb such a thought. I had feared — feared dreadfully — but there is a difference between fearing and knowing. A terrible difference. Up to the last it was possible, minute by minute, to do some little thing for her. Up to the last it was possible to find some encouraging trifle to grasp at. I am amazed now that I was able to do this. But I did. I did up to the last second, and then — the unfathomable gulf between that second and the second afterwards. The difference between the struggling continued, however ominously defeat loomed up, and the struggle finished, defeat a fact.

The finality of it; Jane here — then Jane gone! Gone irretrievably — mysteriously gone, but gone.

Gone—yet here. I could still see and feel her long braided hair. I could touch her hand, and for a little it was warm. In the room, all about, lay her Christmas presents; the sewing-basket Cousin Mell had made for her, running all over town for the little spools of silk and the tape measure and the thimble — running eagerly as an expression of love; the doll with the silk dress which those same kind fingers had hurried to finish for her; the half-empty box of crackers she had munched; the small presents her brothers had bought out of their scant savings; the books we had read to her hour after hour in order to distract her troubled thoughts. Surely she, too, was here. It was not possible to blot out in a second such a personality.

Yet she was not here. Something had happened. Something was changed. There was no more I could do—no more any one could do. This was final.

The loss! How a thousand details of the past flooded up, helter-skelter as though to bring her back. How vivid and intense the thousand half-forgotten incidents that came to mind. How changed they all were. How even her future was now the past. The plans we had made for her—the dreams we had dreamed for her—the pleasures which in our eagerness we had anticipated for her—the years ahead—all these were gone too. It was inconceivable that one could imagine this thing until it was.

I grieved—intensely. That which

I loved had been wrenched away from me. However much was left seemed to make no difference — did not in the slightest fill the aching void. I wanted Jane — only Jane. My thoughts refused to steady on anything but her. They swung back into the past; they swung forward into the future; they came to an awful standstill before the present.

Friends crept in. They spoke kindly. They spoke lovingly, out of full hearts. But their words were empty. This did not, could not, concern them as it concerned me. I appreciated their sympathy. They filled my heart with the realization that I was forming with them newer and deeper friendships. My love for them was vitalized, renewed because of their sincere love

of Jane; because of their gentle and willing kindness. But I could gather from them nothing in the way of consolation.

I could, at first, gather nothing from myself. I had no fixed religious belief to which I could turn. I felt God to be an unsolved mystery. For many years I had read much and pondered deeply in an effort to work out some intelligent theory of life — some underlying and convincing explanation of why we are here, whither we are going. Daily contact with my children emphasized the need. I was educating them, to what? Without an objective how could I set their course? I was not skeptical, but I was inquiring.

The first day passed and I knew

nothing but chaos. Then there were details to be handled. The question of the service must be determined. At this point there came to my mind, and to the mother's mind, the memory of a young clergyman of whom we had long had good report, but whom neither of us knew personally. Yet instantly we agreed that he was the one through whom we could best express our wishes. Somehow he had come to stand to us as a man embodying earnest sincerity, and that, above all things else, was what we wished to unfold. We called him. He came. We found we were not mistaken in our almost inspirational choice.

But, good as he was, he had never known Jane, and there seemed something heartless in wholly turning

over to a stranger those last few intimate minutes. Even handled as simply and beautifully as he proposed — a few Psalms, a poem, a prayer, and sweet music — I felt something to be lacking. It was we, the parents, who were missing. This was our child and we were sitting dumb. And so, feeling my way, I sat down and expressed the mother's thoughts and mine in this Prayer of Relinquishment which was read at the service:

O God, our Father, we turn to You like little children when our hearts are heavy and our thoughts perplexed by the great mystery of Death — turn to You in awe and reverence as the spiritual symbol of eternal parenthood. In the full pride and joy of life there are times, O Lord, when as fathers and mothers we may feel sufficient unto ourselves; when, in our attitude towards our children we may seem to usurp Your place. But You will under-

stand. For if You are our symbol, we, too, are Your symbol. If we are in You, You are in us. In life we serve our children as Your emissaries. In no other spirit could we feel for You that personal tenderness and intimacy we feel for them. We care for them as long as we are able, as You would care for them; we teach and guard and love them as You would teach and guard and love them. For we are their fathers and mothers. And You, Lord God of Hosts, are not a jealous God.

But when one of our children goes from us, the mortal parents, to You, the eternal parent, then we in our turn become as little children. We seek, through the veil surrounding Your presence, Your hand. We listen for Your comforting voice. We search our souls for the God in us which is You, our Father. We need, then, the thought of Your Being and the Eternal purpose that expresses.

And we question — question as little children do. We ask why it is that a life in the bud, giving promise of such rich blossoming, is cut down before its fulfilment. Dazed by the personal loss — by the silence where there was laughter — by the sudden hushing of that

warm, eager little personality — there are many things we do not understand. But it is not easy for us to believe that this, in any ordinary sense, is Your will. We know that in everything You seek completion. We see life continuing about us, even now, unceasingly — a new flower springing up wherever by chance one falls. And so we feel, still not understanding perfectly, that You must have provided some way of continuance — if not Here, then There. We part with our child unwillingly. You, Father, will understand that, too. We believe that unwillingly You ask us to do this. But we believe that somehow, somewhere, she will live on — a soul created in love, cherished with love, followed by love even into Your loving arms.

We have done all we could. We shall still cling to as much of her as we may. But her future is now no longer in our care but Yours. We surrender her to You in the flush of her early youth — a pure and beautiful girl child — our elder daughter Jane.

This is the poem—Stevenson's "In Memoriam F. A. S"—that we read, adapting it to Jane:

Yet, O stricken heart, remember, O remember
How of human days she lived the better part.
April came to bloom, and never dim December
Breathed its killing chills upon the head or heart.

Doomed to know not Winter, only Spring, a being
Trod the flowery April blithely for a while,
Took her fill of music, joy of thought and seeing,
Came and stayed and went, nor ever ceased to smile.

Came and stayed and went, and now, when all is finished,
You alone have crossed the melancholy stream,
Yours the pang, but hers, O hers, the undiminished,
Undecaying gladness, undeparted dream.

All that life contains of torture, toil and treason,
Shame, dishonour, death to her were but a name.
Here, a child, she dwelt through all the singing season
And ere the day of sorrow departed as she came.

XI

THE prayer sprang into being spontaneously. The significant feature of it to me was that in the space of a few minutes I had swung from a negative conception of God to a positive. He was still a symbol, but to explain Him in any more definite terms was, I found, not necessary. Vague though He was, mysterious though He might be, inexplicable though He must ever be, He was so inevitably essential to an understanding of my new emotions that I could not think without Him. He was the expression of something in me bigger than I, by myself, could contain. My conception of fatherhood had grown suddenly to propor-

tions exceeding the limits of my own mind. I was perforce following Jane into Eternity. Years were no longer long enough. Without this sense of continuance it was impossible for me to read any meaning whatever either into her brief life here or my own. Impressively it was borne in upon me that without this idea of immortality, involved in God, Life and Love sink to a level of triviality utterly abhorrent; our highest emotions possess no more than current value. Without this belief, parenthood itself is undeserving of recognition, and grief over the loss of a child as ignoble and as pettily personal as concern over the loss of property. There is no escape from this grim logic. I had a precious gift and I lost it. If that were all, then

my great sorrow was only a weakness. It was even ludicrous.

But I knew this not to be the truth, for after the first wrench of physical separation I had been steadily moving toward a vision of Jane finer and more perfect than any I had ever known. This was based upon the deeper and more hallowed emotions which until now had been buried beneath the surface. I was no more reconciled to her going, in any ordinary sense, than before. That was impossible. I craved as much as ever her warm, vital presence. But, too, I was getting below that beautiful exterior to the soul of her — to the imperishable soul of her. My love was broadening with every passing minute. Previously I had been able to compass her within a decade;

now I was satisfied with nothing less than time immeasurable.

With this lengthened perspective —a perspective born not so much of inspiration as from the logic of the new conditions — I began to see in a different light what at first had oppressed me as poignant cruelties. I had mourned the loss of Jane's future —the future I had built up in my own mind. I felt that, without this, she had died incomplete — had been struck down unfinished. But, as I reasoned now, this was not true. She was complete — up to that point. And none of us can hope to attain to anything more than that. She was as complete at ten as she would have been at twenty or forty or eighty. We cannot say that we

are ever complete. She was not a broken blossom: a blossom — yes, but a perfect and complete blossom.

With this lengthened perspective I received, too, a new light on death itself. It always comes and always will, as a ghastly surprise, and yet, without being morbid, it is easy to realize that from the moment we begin to live we begin to die. Every day is a page turned over in the Book of Life — a finished page bringing us one day nearer the final page. Yesterday, for all of us, is as dead as though a thousand years ago. Had Jane lived to be twenty, we must have seen the girl of ten vanish as completely as in the girl of ten the child of two had vanished. The metamorphosis, in life, is more gradual, but

it is just as complete — just as final. This is not a fact to brood over, but to recognize it makes the last great Change seem less startlingly abrupt.

It makes, too, by analogy, the idea of continuance even more convincingly logical. We have every right to infer — a greater right certainly than those who deny — that the same law governing us through our earthly experience will remain unbroken at this Life's supremest moment. We may change, but we shall not cease. Otherwise there is no law, and nothing remains but anarchy — chaos. If this is all, then our human and temporal passions cannot be regarded as even tragical. They become merely contemptible. Anything so ephemeral, so whimsically accidental as that

would connote cannot be said to matter one way or the other.

In order, then, to maintain the dignity of our love — which involves the dignity of our soul — no alternative but a belief in immortality is possible. If we do away with the one, we must do away with the other. No man who has loved and been loved by a child like Jane could face such an alternative.

With this lengthened perspective I received a new point of view on my personal grief. I saw that it was largely selfish and to that extent false. I was altogether too self-centered in my emotions. I had thought of myself as devoted to my daughter, and yet in this crisis I was dwelling, not on her, but on myself. That was lit-

erally true. My grief was not based on what she had lost, but on what I had lost. I was not worrying about her new condition. It never occurred to me to doubt but that she was happy in whatever plane she had found herself — happy and content. I could not be specific. I had no picture of her surroundings, no theory, not even a conception — and felt no need of one; but I was confident that in no way she suffered.

Even in thinking of her lost future on earth I had not been so much concerned with what had been taken away from her as in what had been taken away from me.

I faced this fact with deep humiliation. To dwell upon myself at a time like this was not commendable. It

suggested more a love of self than a love of Jane.

I saw clearly that my own suffering was a relatively unimportant matter. It was not in this self-centered spirit that I had cared for Jane here. In those other days I eliminated all thought of self. That, more completely than ever, I must do now. Otherwise my love was meaningless.

Ever since, I have kept my thoughts on Jane and this has helped wonderfully.

As the weeks creep by, I feel that perhaps right here lies the solution of the whole problem of successful continued living in the face of such a catastrophe as this — and surely if I seek continued living for her, I must for myself — right here in a continu-

ance of the same relationship with Jane which governed me while she could still walk by my side. I must consider her and not myself. She is to-day as much my daughter as yesterday. There are many little things I cannot do for her, but after all they are little things. I can buy for her no more tam-o'-shanters or woolen gloves, but that was not very much to do. My important gifts — if any — were as intangible as ether — were of the heart. They were the gifts of love. Those gifts I can continue. I may miss the pleasure of the visible reaction, but that is not important. It was not important before. In everything I did I had a secret joy of which she knew nothing, and that I may still have, or it is possible that she — now that she is in-

finitely wiser than I — may see into all my secret places and so share even this with me.

We must go on, Jane and I, in the same old spirit of genial comradeship. As I refuse to think of her as dead, I must not allow her to think of me as dead. I must live and give as I did before — give more honestly and less selfishly of my affection. I must be joyful and alive in my thoughts of her — walking by her side the new paths as well as the old. Things are not as I would have them, but they are as they are. That much is final. But nothing else is final either with her or with me. To believe otherwise would be to destroy all meaning for everything which has so far been. It would be to belittle the glori-

ous past — to make insignificant the very things that are most significant. If that complex, vibrant personality can be bounded by the brief period of ten years, it is not the wonderful and beautiful creation I know it to be. And then not anything at all in life is of import. That is unthinkable.

Nothing less than the majestic conception of eternity is big enough to dignify fatherhood and motherhood and childhood. Nothing less can explain them; nothing less fulfill them.

So we must press on — Jane and I. We must not let our lives rest here. We must no longer limit ourselves to days, but think in terms of time unending.

We must press on. Some day—somewhere—somehow, we shall meet once more. The certainty of that is Jane's last fine gift to me.

XII

A YEAR has passed — a year in which Jane and I have lived under the new conditions. For me it has not been always easy; for her, because she is a child and because she is dealing in new values, I cannot believe that she has been conscious in any painful way of our temporary separation. Her memory may, as it were, be held in abeyance. Or she may now be blessed with a new type of memory — a broader and more inclusive memory which, linked with Eternity, gives her the privilege of gauging more wisely than we these momentary pangs however sharp.

I do not know. I often sit and wonder. I stare at the sky — at the morn-

ing colors, at the stark blue of midday, at the flaming challenge of sunset, at the cool silver of the stars in the purple night—and wonder and wonder. I say over and over again, "Where is she?" I receive no answer. And yet, because it is such a mystery, and because she herself is and always was such a mystery, and because I am still another mystery, and this inconceivably complex world is another mystery, the very silence bids me hope. Every scientist, no matter how boldly he plunges back into the billion years or more of the past, reaches finally just this point—where he can only stare and hope, like me. The first stir of life which led to us, whether made manifest in the primordial ooze of ancient oceans or in some more beauti-

ful fashion, remains still the supreme miracle. Unless we include Death which is like unto birth—more like unto birth perhaps than we now realize.

We have gone through another year—Jane and I. She remains to me as vital, as intense, as ever. She is still my daughter. She is still an integral part of me and my everyday life. I experience many things I wish she were here to enjoy with me, but I see much suffering I am glad she has escaped. I share with her now only the best. Sometimes alone at night I go over with her the little happenings of the day that I know would please her—seeing again the old smile flutter about her lips and the old light warm her blue eyes.

I have found consolation in the

thought that each day brings me one day nearer Jane's own estate. Not that I am eager to die. I have compelling interests here and mean to attend to them as long as I may. Jane has given me a fuller appreciation and a keener sense of the value of all she left behind. She has conferred upon me a deeper obligation to live to my utmost and best while here. But for all that, I am inevitably moving not away from but towards her. Whatever her new life is, I shall in the course of an interval growing ever shorter finally share it with her. This makes the prospect of my own last journey appear less dreadful. I have a daughter over there.

But when I come to Jane, it must not be as some dead thing she may

not recognize. My soul must be alive. I must come to her from this side alert with a tale of many things done here. To go on with her I must be at my best. And so if our meeting is something to which I may look forward, it cannot be in any melancholic fashion or at any cost to the present. Only by dwelling on life here as well as on life to come can I keep open the bridge between us.

It is difficult to hold the balance true. It is difficult but not impossible. Ann — Jane's sister of half her age — does this better than any of us because she is most natural about it. She feels Jane's absence and talks often of the time when she will see her again. But, too, she includes her constantly in her everyday affairs — sometimes with

startling vividness. She ran in from play not long ago with the announcement,

"Jane's out there."

"That's fine," I said. "What did she say?"

"She wants to come in."

"Will you tell her I should like very much to see her?"

Out she skipped and was soon back.

"She can't come," she reported.

"I'm sorry. You saw her?"

She nodded vigorously.

"She was looking happy?"

"She were just Jane," she answered.

Just Jane — that was all. There was nothing psychic in this incident. It was the result on Ann's part of keeping her sister alive by continuing, through her unchained imagination,

the same quick relationship which had previously existed.

It is we, the living, who make our dead so dead. Death, to be sure, is death. There is no use in quibbling. It marks a definite and inescapable change. But even in our ignorance we need not make it anything more. Most, if not all, religious concepts emphasize this unknown future as a hallowed and possibly a joyous state. Even unbelievers speak no worse of it than Oblivion — an everlasting sleep. Of course we all struggle as long as possible to resist this change as we all struggle to resist lesser changes. It is such a terrible saber cut at our human bonds! It takes from us so much!

But once the physical battle is lost,

then it is for us to say whether with that we shall lose everything. For at this point there is a great deal left — however much has gone, a great deal left. Yet it is possible to destroy this also. Overwhelmed by grief, it is easy to dwell only on what we have lost and close our eyes to all else. So we bury the gladsome past with the present and sometimes even the possible future. Then is death utter and complete.

Or there is Ann's way — the way, once more, of a little child. It is within our power to keep alive in our memories the eternal essence — the spiritual presence — of those who precede us and to insist upon associating our thoughts with that. However intangible at first it may seem — however

unsatisfactory in comparison with what we had — this is something real.

As the days go by and we cherish this conception, we perceive more and more how very real it is — how significant a part of our own the soul of them was even when they were here. It is this fact, increasingly easier to see, that finally invests them with a new dignity and a new beauty expressing, with a steady and serene assurance like that of the eternal stars, the promise of more — much more to come.

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